

1) Ron Ignace¹

I was in and out of residential school. I went and then got really sick. I got scabies all over my body when I first went into residential school. I don't know, it might have been rickets. My great-grandmother heard about it and she came and took me home. And she doctored me up so when I got healed I went back to the day school at Skeetchestn for a while. I wound up back in residential school for a year or two and then my parents took me out early because they had to go down and work in the strawberry fields in the summer before the school year was out. They took me out of the residential school and off we went to the States...

...The other hard thing in residential school is that I became a bedwetter. And the thing they did with bedwetters is that you had to wash your own sheets and pack it down to the girls' side. That was devastating because during the day you are standing around outside trying to look like a champ in front of all the girls, smiling at them, and you're walking down the girls' side, being a bedwetter. It was not too good for the morale; it was very, very tough.

You know, we would sneak away sometimes. I had some friends from the Reserve and we would sneak away, climb over the mountains, melt snow up in the mountains and boil up a cup of coffee up there. We enjoyed that, just to get away.

One time before I ran away we had a field trip and the priest took us to Riverside Park. We didn't have any money and they had these machines they had little cranes in these that picked up fifty cent pieces, and nickels and dimes, you know. I was trying my luck, and I got frustrated and I looked around, and I said, "Hey nobody's guarding this thing," and crawled under and I got a big handful of money and filled up my pockets. I went running around and gave money to all the other kids. We went on rides and rides all that day....

...Hawkeye, he was always going around and threatening the guys, "I'm Hawkeye you can't get away from me." A lot of guys would try to run away. Swim across the river climb over the mountains, go down the road, a lot of different ways. And old Hawkeye was out there and he had a good track record of catching you, hey.

Brother Murphy was there too. I remember getting whipped by him for doing something or getting blamed for something. The way I remember getting whipped up there was at nighttime. Just before everybody lined up to go to bed and get cod liver oil poured down your throat, they would call the names of the guys who were going to get a strapping. And then I got called up. You bent over and they put a wet towel on your bare ass and they got a strap out and you got hit. Yeah, you try not to cry and give them the pleasure of letting them know that you're hurting you but that was tough to do...

¹ Ron Ignace, in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School*, ed. Agnes Jack (Penticton, B.C., 2006), 3-9.

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Kamloops Residential School:
Primary Source Analysis

Instructions:

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I started school when I was eight or nine and went until I was thirteen. Our mom started sewing; sewing us clothes. When we reached school, the worst part, was they took away our clothing. The clothes were the closest thing to us, from mom, and we had to take all that off. That was very hard. We had numbers given to us as they gave us our uniforms. They took the clothes mom gave us and we never saw them again till we were ready to go home. The shoes we had to wear until we left. I used to get sore on the back of my feet because my shoes got too small, sores that never seemed to heal. That I'll never forget. That was painful...

...I used to look for my brother all the time when the boys used to come in. We had no contact with them. They [*sic*] were different dining rooms. We saw them from a distance, never close. I remember this one boy, I used to feel so bad for him. He used to always wet his bed and they used to put that sheet over him and they'd make him stand in the middle there where we'd all go to church. He'd be in the middle of everything, with the sheet over his head. That was pitiful. We sure didn't find it funny. It was cruel. I've seen that boy all grown up and he has a wife and kids. He's still alive though, but I don't think he drinks. Maybe he did when he was younger, I don't know, I lost track of him. But, we sure knew him because everybody knew who was under that sheet. I don't know how, maybe someone told us, because his head was covered. I don't think any of the girls laughed or anything. We had nobody to tell our feelings to in there, that's for sure...

...That girl with a wet bed, she was severely punished. I didn't know what they done with them the minute they walked out the door, we didn't hear anything. All we knew was that we pity them because they would get a licking or whatever. Never heard what they did. We used to be kind of scared of that one brother who used to work down in the furnace room. We used to be scared to enter that door because they said that brother was in there. I remember one or two girls going in there, too, but we were so scared. I don't know if there was any force or anything. There's one thing I'm glad about, I never got abused, you know. But, my husband was saying I did get abused. I can't even deal with people.

We didn't know nothing about sex or anything like that and whatever was going on in that room was scary, I don't know what it was. We all ran by every time we saw that door, I guess he scared us. We wouldn't dare enter there. It seemed like a dungeon. I know there used to be a brother, oh I forgot his name, he was a tall one anyways. Never saw priests either, hardly ever saw them. I worked upstairs in their rooms but I didn't see them. I just fixed beds and cleaned, then just leave and that was about it...

...I used to like working in the nuns' and priests' dining room because I could eat their scraps. It used to be so good, you know their scraps. I was always hungry; we never seemed to get enough. I even used to eat leaves on trees, it sure wasn't good though but it was something to eat. The food they gave us sometimes was sour, but I ate it anyways, because I was always hungry...

²E.L., in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School*, ed. Agnes Jack (Penticton, B.C., 2006), 13-19.

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I was punished for some things I can't remember what. Punishment was for petty little things, like whether your bed was made right, they would flip a quarter on your bed and it had to bounce. Your shoes had to be shinny and oh, my God, all these other things, shirt buttoned right to the neck. Then on the weekends they would keep me in, it was just like jail. I was glad when all my friends came back from their holidays because at least I had company besides all those nuns, brothers, sisters, and priests. I spent Christmas, day in and day out praying while my friends were at home with their relatives for Christmas holidays.

Now it gives you funny feelings. You saw a lot of things that kids shouldn't have seen when they're growing up; you know the abuse. The things we were put through, these things shouldn't have happened. We were so young, we didn't know where to turn for help. I was whipped so many times that eventually you get so tough that you block those things out and you can't feel things, you'd get hit and you can't feel it no more. That's how it was here.

I held on to all those beatings, all the put downs and other things were entrenched in us. My adult life has been nothing but ups and downs really. Over the last few years it's been on a rise so I look back and see a lot of effects from what happened, what they done to me here. It rolled right into my adult life, and I'm trying to shake a lot of it right now. I think I'm doing a good job...

...I witnessed a lot of things over in the annex in terms of abuse. The supervisors they seemed meaner. There were times when I saw girls that were abused downstairs in that one room in the annex. There used to be a mattress there. I don't know if the girls liked it or not but they were always down there, you could hear what they were doing. The supervisors would be there too you know. That's when I got into the booze, I was there, I saw it. I never was involved, I never personally went down there with a girl or anything like that. I remember those girls either being taken down there or maybe on their own will, I don't know. I saw what was going on with those girls. Nobody wants to talk about it...

...As young as I was, I formed a little group—I don't know if Eddy Jules was there, Yogi Jules, old football, a couple of my old buds. I said, "We are going to go down, find a way into that damned kitchen and we are going to steal things and bring them up to those younger ones that are crying all the time." They were always hungry, God that was sick...

³ Sheni7, in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School*, ed. Agnes Jack (Penticton, B.C., 2006), 121-128.

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Anonymous⁴

I was even separated from my sisters because they were older and you weren't really allowed to go over and see them. I think Eleanor or Barb came over once in a while to see us and that felt good because the biggest thing for me was the loneliness. But it seemed like so long in between, they never came over very often. I used to sneak out of bed and go into the room and just cry. The loneliness was pretty difficult, to show your feelings to others...

...I remember eating a lot of stew and a lot of butter, but it always had a rancid taste or a smell to it. They wouldn't let you leave until you ate everything on your plate including the butter. I remember seeing them making kids eat the butter and they'd get sick. I never gave my food away but I remember eating other kids butter for them so they wouldn't have to get sick, but I did it. I guess in a sense of trying to save them.

I remember the porridge. It was thick, and usually cold by the time we got there. A lot of the times, like now, you have your milk and brown sugar. I can't remember ever having that. I think there was some bread there, like homemade bread. I can't remember ever having milk with it. But I remember stews, there was always that. I don't remember how often we had stew. Now you have different varieties of food for lunch and I don't remember ever having that.

I don't remember being hungry, but I remember different things, like Mary had an orange somebody had sent her from home and somebody took it. Little things would be sent in packaged. I don't remember if I ever got a package or not...

...The only recollection I have of going to town was when there was group of us that got to go on a bus. I don't remember them telling us where we were going. We were going to the hospital, to get our tonsils out. One other time we were all paraded into town in front of this elementary school and we had to sing. I didn't like that. That was humiliating. I thought, even as a child. Kids were calling us names and everything...

...When I was older there was one incident that happened towards myself, I don't even know what you would call it, I guess, sexual abuse. There was a little room, like a porch I guess it would be, because I remember it was glass. We used to always play in there. We were playing in there one day and, I don't know, just all of the sudden, there was just two of us. This other girl, she just wanted me to lay down so I did and I don't remember feeling anything. She laid on top of me and was sort of imitating to me what she had seen, maybe what her parents did or what was done to her, I don't know. I still can't explain why she did that. I think the nuns caught us. They probably gave us a strapping, like it happened, but I was still wondering why she did that. It was weird. I didn't do that to her, she did that to me. It must have happened to her, so I guess it's a form of sexual abuse. To me it was just strange, I was just a little kid and I was looking at her, like, wondering what are you doing? She was imitating all these things, it only happened the one time...

⁴ Anonymouns, in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School*, ed. Agnes Jack (Penticton, B.C., 2006), 143-148.

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